



# Drinking Water Fountain Problems at Park Place

Message sent by Joyce Kelly to all Region 10 staff on June 23, 2014

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EPA management understands that there is a problem with some of the drinking water fountains in the Park Place building and we are committed to addressing it.

## What you need to know:

- You can drink water from any drinking water source (sink, drinking fountain, or refrigerator) on EPA-occupied floors EXCEPT from the instant hot water dispensers or if there is a “do not drink” sign posted. All other water sources that exceed EPA drinking water standards for lead or copper have been posted and/or disconnected.
- We’re looking at how to fix the water quality problems.
- We’ll keep staff informed in a variety of ways as we continue to learn more (by email, on the info page, with meetings and Q&A sessions, etc.)

## What we know:

The new lease between the General Services Administration (GSA) and Washington Holdings for EPA’s space in the Park Place building requires testing for lead in drinking water before EPA occupies each new floor. Based on the results of this testing OEA initiated additional sampling on the other EPA-occupied floors.

For more information on drinking water sampling in the Park Place building and laboratory results: [Drinking Water in Park Place](#)

- May 8, 2014. The EPA Move Team, Office of Management Programs and representatives from the Regional Health and Safety Committee learned from the Park Place Building owners that water on the newly remodeled 16<sup>th</sup> floor exceeded the allowable drinking water level for lead in the Break Room refrigerator and the “Grab & Go” Service area sink. The allowable lead level is 15 micrograms per liter (µg/L) or parts per billion (ppb). Sample results from the 16<sup>th</sup> floor showed lead concentrations above this level ranged from 25 to 75 ppb (between 2 and 5 times allowable levels). This information prompted the Assistant Regional Administrator to send the “[Don’t Drink the Water](#)” message to staff in the building.

- May 9, 2014. Based on drinking water data for testing that was conducted on floors 17, 20, 21 and at the Green Tree daycare center, the Assistant Regional Administrator [lifted the “Don’t Drink the Water” advisory](#) and the building initiated additional water testing on the 16<sup>th</sup> floor. In addition, the Assistant Regional Administrator indicated that EPA would conduct its own sampling on the other EPA-occupied floors. However, by May 9, **no sampling had been conducted on the other floors** occupied by EPA.
- May 15, 2014. We learned, from the Park Place Building owners that water collected from the new unoccupied Maternal Wellness Center (MWC) on the 16<sup>th</sup> floor also exceeded the allowable level for lead of 15 ppb. Sample results from the MWC showed lead concentrations above this level ranged from 22 to 27 ppb, (nearly 2 times the allowable level). This was a new fixture and after several days of flushing, the sink was sampled again on May 20 and the results showed levels of 1.1 ppb and < 1.0 ppb. No one has been exposed to this source. Sampling will be conducted again before the MWC is opened in August.
- May 28, 2014. OEA staff sampled drinking fountains, kitchen sinks, the sink in the 13<sup>th</sup> floor Maternal Wellness Center and ice in freezers on the unrenovated EPA-occupied floors 7 through 13 and 18. Samples were submitted to the EPA Manchester Laboratory for analysis of lead and copper. The refrigerators on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> floors did not contain any ice to sample. The water supply lines to those ice makers were already disconnected.
- June 13, 2014. OEA, the Move Team and representatives of the Regional Health and Safety Committee received and shared laboratory results from the EPA sampling which showed several drinking water fountains exceeded allowable levels for lead or copper. All drinking water sources that exceed allowable levels are posted and/or disconnected.

## What don’t we know?

- Although we know where lead and copper are a problem, we don’t know why. The fountains and faucets may be sources of lead, but it may also be the piping or soldering connections or the fixtures.
- We have not tested for copper on the newly remodeled floors.
- We have not yet tested the “InSinkErator” Instant Hot Water Dispensers – **these should not be used for drinking until further notice.**

## What are we doing about it?

- The Move Team and representatives from the Regional Health and Safety Committee have held three Q&A sessions with EPA staff to present the sampling results, receive input and answer questions.
- We will soon offer blood lead and copper testing to anyone with concerns. Blood lead testing is especially important for pregnant women and anyone using the water fountain on 10 south.
- We have contacted and shared drinking water data with lead experts from the Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Units and King County and Washington State Departments of Health.
- We are preparing to test the hot water dispensers. Signs have been posted since June 19, 2014 advising people not to drink water from the dispensers.
- We are working with GSA and the building owners to provide a filtered drinking water fountain on every floor.
- We will conduct annual testing to confirm that our drinking water meets EPA's standards.
- The EPA Move Team, OEA, and the Regional Health and Safety Officer are committed to investigating the cause(s) and source(s) of the high levels of lead and copper to prevent future exposures.

## The test results:

The following two drinking fountains had lead levels higher than the allowable level of 15 ppb:

- 10th floor South. The lead result was 365 ppb (24.3 times the allowable level).
- 12th floor Southwest. The lead result was 18.4 ppb (1.2 times the allowable level).

The following six drinking fountains had copper levels higher than the allowable level of 1,300 ppb:

- 7th floor North. The copper result was 3,660 ppb (2.8 times the allowable level).
- 8th floor North. The copper result was 1,360 ppb (just above the

allowable level).

- 9th floor North. The copper result was 1,320 ppb (just above the allowable level).
- 10th floor North. The copper result was 4,100 ppb (3.2 times the allowable level).
- 13th floor North. The copper result was 5,130 ppb (3.9 times the allowable level).
- 18th floor North. The copper result was 2,370 ppb (1.8 times the allowable level).

### **Let us know what we may be missing:**

If you have questions about what we are doing to address the drinking water quality issues or would like to provide input, please contact Grady Maxwell, Regional Health and Safety Officer, 206-553-0241, [maxwell.grady@epa.gov](mailto:maxwell.grady@epa.gov) or Mark Filippini, 206-553-6327, [filippini.mark@epa.gov](mailto:filippini.mark@epa.gov).

### **For more information about lead and copper:**

Lead: <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/tf.asp?id=93&tid=22>

Copper: <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/tf.asp?id=205&tid=37>

### **Health contacts:**

For a referral to a health care professional specializing in exposure to lead or copper we suggest you contact:

#### **The Occupational and Environmental Clinic at Harborview (for adults)**

325 9th Avenue

Seattle, WA 98104

<http://www.uwmedicine.org/locations/occupational-and-environmental-harborview>

(206) 520-5000

#### **Northwest Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit (for**

**children)**

325 9th Avenue  
Seattle, WA 98104

[www.depts.washington.edu/pehsu](http://www.depts.washington.edu/pehsu)

(206) 744-9380

Toll Free West of the Mississippi River: 1-877-KID-CHEM or (877) 543-2436

E-mail [oemp@u.washington.edu](mailto:oemp@u.washington.edu)

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